



Science Fiction Society of Northern New Jersey

## NOVEMBER 2010 NEWSLETTER

**I Put A Spell On You: Witches, Warlocks & Sorcerers: Fall under the spell of witches, warlocks and sorcerers.**  
This month we're enchanted with all things magical. Good witches, bad witches, fictional witches and the Salem Witch Trials - if it can hex, bedevil, or twitch a nose - it's up for discussion.

### **That's Science Fiction**

**Tuesday November 2, 2010 – 7p**

Hillsdale Public Library

**Horror Hotel (1960)**

\*Dining follows the movie.

### **Suspense Central**

**Monday November 8, 2010 – 8p**

Borders /Interstate Shopping Center  
Rt. 17 South, Ramsey, NJ

**Dead Witch Walking by Kim Harrison**

### **Drawing A Crowd**

**Wednesday November 10, 2010 – 8p**

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

**Magic in comics/graphics**

For additional information click

[www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com](http://www.fantasygamesandhobbies.com)

### **Face the Fiction**

**Saturday November 13, 2010 – 8p**

Borders Books & Music

**Laura Anne Gilman:**

<http://www.lauraannegilman.net/blog/>

\*Full details on p. 2

### **Films to Come: 4-Star Movie Discussion Group**

**Wednesday November 17, 2010 – 7p**

Ramsey Borders/Interstate Shopping Center  
This group discusses the world of cinema and entertainment. Classic, current and upcoming genre and genre-related films, TV, books and media happenings are discussed. If it deals with entertainment, our Master of Entertainment

Moderator will cover it. \*Dining follows this event.

### **Themes of the Fantastic**

**Tuesday November 23, 2010 – 8p**

Wayne Public Library

**Magic VS. Science, witches in SF and genre**

[www.waynepubliclibrary.org](http://www.waynepubliclibrary.org)

### **Modern Masters**

**Friday November 26, 2010 – 8p**

Panera Restaurant

1300 Rt. 17 North, Ramsey, NJ

**Implied Spaces by Walter John Williams**

**\*Note location change for this month only. In addition, no pre-meeting. We will grab food at Panera and enjoy a fun meeting.**

### **Rogue Trader: Wolves in the Fold**

**Saturday November 27, 2010 – 2p – 10p**

Fantasy Games & Hobbies

9 Miller Road, Mahwah, NJ

Rogue Trader is a game of space adventure, set in the grim darkness of Games Workshop's Warhammer 40000 universe. Are we the wolves in the fold, or merely the sheep?

please visit [www.sfsnj.com](http://www.sfsnj.com) for full details

*SFSNNJ Face the Fiction presents:  
Laura Anne Gilman*

*Join us for guest Laura Anne Gilman (<http://lauraannegilman.net>). Laura Anne Gilman started her professional life as a book editor for a major NYC house, fitting her writing into the remaining available hours. In 2004 she switched that around, becoming a full-time writer and freelance editor for [www.carinapress.com](http://www.carinapress.com). Laura Anne is the author of the popular Cosa Nostradamus books for Luna (the "Retrievers" and "Paranormal Scene Investigations" urban fantasy series), and the award-nominated The Vineart War trilogy from Pocket. She is a member of the on-line writers consortium BookView Cafe and continues to write and sell short fiction. She also writes paranormal romances as Anna Leonard. Follow her on Twitter: @LAGilman*

***When:** Saturday, November 13, 2010*

***Where:** Borders Books & Music*

*235 Interstate Shopping Center*

*Ramsey, NJ 07446*

*201.760.1967*

***Time:** 8p*

***Face the Fiction: Where imagination lives!  
Only at the SFSNNJ***

## October Meeting Recaps

### **That's Science Fiction! – *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* - Tuesday October 5, 2010**

#### **That's Science Fiction Presents: *Wolfman vs. Frankenstein*, 10/5/2010 Event Recap**

Due to technical difficulties, we were unable to view this month's featured selection as listed, however we did get in a cool viewing of *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, the 1943 blockbuster featuring Lon Chaney as Lawrence Talbot/the Wolf Man and Bela Lugosi as Frankenstein's Monster. The film was... OK, the film was absolutely stupid, making me wonder if there has ever been any writing talent in Hollywood. Seriously? This was the best script they could come up with? This makes *Freddy vs. Jason* or *Van Helsing* look like Shakespeare.

The film starts with two incompetent grave robbers opening the tomb of Lawrence Talbot and accidentally reviving the sleeping wolf man, who promptly (and randomly) murders one of the grave robbers and runs off to Cardiff. Why Cardiff, you ask? Well it is the first of the overly contrived plot devices that is used to introduce a character, in this case Dr. Mannerling, who uncovers Talbot's secret (which doesn't require much effort since Talbot explains the whole thing). What happens next? Why, unlikely plot contrivance #2, of course! Larry goes on the road to find the wandering gypsy Maleva, whose son was the one who turned Talbot into a werewolf. This takes him all of about 1 day, during which he convinces the old woman who would not help him in the prior film to help him this time. In addition, Maleva apparently knows of a man who can cure Lawrence Talbot! This, of course, begs the question of why the old bat did not bring her son in for curing. Some posited that she must have only just heard about Doctor Frankenstein, however since apparently the entire world had known about him for years before Talbot's death, we have to wonder exactly how we got to here to plot contrivance #3, but somehow we managed.

Travel takes us to Vasaria, the silly town terrorized by Dr. Frankenstein and his rather insipid Monster. The villagers are proud of having burned the Good doctor out of his home, and explain as much to Larry and Maleva, causing Larry to have a nervous breakdown (he is a bit of a wimp), which leads us to unlikely contrivance #4: Were-Wimp stumbles into frozen Monster.

Somehow, while uncovering and befriending the monster (don't think about it, you will just stroke out), Larry manages to find a nice suit and trick the Mayor of Vasaria into summoning the Baroness, daughter of Doctor Frankenstein, to help Larry find the secrets of Life and Death and cure his Lycanthropy... But wait! Somehow Dr. Mannerling from Cardiff arrives (apparently he has a teleportation device) to help us uncover implausible contrivance #5, where he manages to help convince the really gullible villagers that he should be allowed to destroy the Monster with pseudo-science! Of course this backfires since pseudo-science turns regular Doctors in Mad Doctors, and Mannerling unleashes the Frankenstein's Monster's rather pathetic fury on the Were-Wimp, leading to what is likely the most unconvincingly bad monster battle in the history of film in what is likely the most ill-made model I have ever seen (I have played with better terrain at the hobby store).

While detestably stupid in all its aspects, this film was still amusing and entertaining. How did it manage that? I am still not sure, but I have to admit that as insipid as it was, I still had fun. Probably this was due to the company of good friends like Mike, Liz, Chris, and Josephine. Mike was very impressed by the model work and make-up, though he did comment that it seemed strange that Lawrence Talbot always had nice clean clothing to wear even without carrying any luggage. Liz had a lot of fun with the pseudo-science. Chris kept pointing out that we were being too picky, and he was more than willing to give these silly things a pass. Josephine mentioned that she has seen this movie a bunch of times, but it was much better on the big screen.

Next month, 1960's *Horror Hotel*... may the gods have mercy on us all...(Todd Ehrenfels)

#### **Addendum:**

Per Barry's favorite critic, Leonard Maltin (Uses a Four-Star \*\*\*\* system): "*Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*" (1943) 72 min. \*\*\*D: Roy William Neill. Lon Chaney, Jr., Patric Knowles, Ilona Massey, Bela Lugosi, Maria Ouspenskaya, Lionel Atwill, Dennis Hoey, Rex Evans, Dwight Frye. Sequel to both *THE GHOST OF*

FRANKENSTEIN and THE WOLF MAN finds werewolf Chaney seeking Dr. Frankenstein, hoping to be put out of his misery. He finds the scientist is dead - but the Monster isn't. Slick, atmospheric, fast-paced fun; Lugosi's only stint as the Monster.

As one can see, the film is considered a good one of the Universal horror films of the thirties and forties. (Chris H)

### **Face the Fiction: Howling Good Werewolf Panel – Saturday, October 9, 2010**

The evening started early with Paul and myself discussing Filk music, the indomitable Jean, and the joys of XKCD. By the way, Paul, these are the pictures of the Dark Eldar to which I was referring during our conversation: [Dark Eldar Advance Order](#). As you can see, from a sheer model perspective, these are pure awesomeness. Luckily for me, though, Anton showed up and took over being the center of attention.

Upon hearing that his co-panelist, Ekaterina Sedia, had to cancel due to the flu, Anton realized that he was going to have to shine extra bright, and shine he did. Anton was an excellent sport, sitting down at the table with us and chatting like old friends about all manner of genre topics. We started, of course, with the impressive spectacle of NY Comic Con.

Anton, who works for Penguin in addition to being a writer of great SF stories, regaled us with tales of the convention, starting with the fact that the shipments of books that had been requested for the convention not showing up and the bosses at the con running to Anton's office to pick up the boxes of books that he kept there. This anecdote was brought on by the fact that Borders, whose management staff had ordered the books weeks ago and who had been told that said books were on the way, had none in stock for the event. The redoubtable Anton solved this by allowing us to purchase the few books that he had with him (causing the Borders inventory system some degree of indigestion, but helping the store out with a half-dozen extra sales of books).

Conversation turned from books to movies and music as Anton explained that he was unable to attend a con-sponsored panel at 7pm the night before due to a previous engagement with the Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers with live orchestral accompaniment at Radio City Music Hall. This led to a discussion of Fantasy novels and the latest tropes and the best of the new bloods, include a half-dozen anecdotes about Patrick Rothfuss (an author that both Anton and I rather like). Patrick Rothfuss' sequel to his best selling debut novel, *The Name of the Wind*, should be hitting shelves next year, so reserve your copy now (along with the fourth book in the Simon Canderous novel).

Mentioning other writers brought us to the works of Jim Butcher and a laughing segue back to the con as fans pestered Anton for information on the elusive writer/ninja who is famous for bringing us Harry Dresden of Dresden Files fame. One colorful fan, who was lamenting the ending of the recent novel, *Changes*, in many things happen that I am not going to spoil for you, was consoled by Anton with the statement, "Well, if you are really upset about *Changes*, and you really love Jim's work, might I humbly recommend my own books..." As a fan of both series, I have to say that I suspect that this campaign will gain him quite a few converts.

One topic of discussion revolved around the concept of process, a subject about which Anton regaled us with great relish. One statement, which caused Chris to guffaw heartily, was, "Writers are liars." Another nugget came in the form of song lyrics, "You can't please everyone but you have to please yourself." One of my favorite suggestions was not to overload readers with data. Too often writers tend to think that because they have a cool idea about the character or world, they have to put it in there somewhere, but Anton advised that if the idea does nothing to enhance the scene it should likely be set aside and held until a time when it was important. BJ and Anton entered into a great discussion about character development and background, which left both of the chuckling in the end. What was said... Ah, well, you had to be there, but let us just say that the Benjamin Franklin Necromancer story is a perfect illustration of saving something for the perfect moment. Another neat point that Anton made was that as a writer, you have to put yourself in the position of the reader and ask yourself, "Do I give a !#\$^#! about this as a reader? If yes, why? If no, why?"

Anyway, we discussed the Simon Canderous books a bit, and Anton announced that he tried to apologize to Jim Butcher for inadvertently copying his pamphlet schtick. In *Dead to Me*, Anton introduces a series of pamphlets based on the old Chaosium Call of Cthulu Monster guides, which called upon investigators to leaf through the book and ask questions. Anton's pamphlets were all things like *So You Are Being Chased by Zombies, Now What?* and such. Jim had a similar trope in the first Dresden book, which he subsequently forgot about so thoroughly that when Anton brought it up, his response was a flummoxed "What pamphlets?" Moving on to more discussion of process in the books, Anton reminded us of something our old pal Dallas Ketchum told us: You have only one shot to hook them early! Forget prologues, concentrate on writing a good, solid first scene that places the reader in the narrative and sets up the present (setting up the future is problematic as it will likely give too much away). Anton starts the story of *Dead to Me* with Simon bringing a beautiful woman to his apartment and accidentally having his power triggered.

I could likely go on for pages and pages about how much fun we had just sitting around that table and chatting, but frankly, I don't want to give too much away since Anton will be returning in April for more fun and mayhem! Really, though, we stayed talking at the store until well past closing. Anton, who had to resume duties at the NY Comicon in the morning, reluctantly left for home as BJ, Mike P., Paul, Gene, and I hied away to the Stateline Diner to chat about movies, science, Paul's explanation about Lunar cycles and their effects on his event attendance, Mike P's proof of really special relativity, BJ's fun with words, and Gene's fun with packages at Columbia. It was a fun close to an awesome night.

Oh, by the way, lest I forget, we did discuss shape-changers as Anton had a short story featuring the Lupercal, evil cherubs being drowned in cups of Iced Hot Cocoa, and a chase through the streets of Manhattan. Intrigued? Just you wait until April! **(event recap by Todd Ehrenfels)**

#### **Suspense Central – *Bad Blood* by L.A. Banks - Monday October 11, 2010**

The weather added a nice touch to last night's Suspense Central. Thunder, lightening, and rain made the discussion of L.A. Bank's *Bad Blood* even more fun.

*Bad Blood* is the first book in L.A. Bank's Crimson Moon series. Banks, a NY Times bestseller and former guest of Face the Fiction is usually known for her Vampire Huntress series. The Huntress series is wildly popular and it was agreed that it looks like Banks will have another winner with her werewolf series. *Bad Blood* was so well received, that moderator Aurelia Long decided she would definitely add the next title in the series, *Bite the Bullet*, to the roster. Aurelia described the book as "werewolves, action, suspense and hot."

*Bad Blood* centers around character Sasha Trudeau. Banks likes to use strong female characters and Sasha does not disappoint. Joining Sasha in this SF meets paranormal romp is Max Hunter.

Sasha is part of an elite group of soldiers working for the government. This elite group has the task of battling the paranormal world so society can remain ignorant and close their eyes at night to sleep. One of the requirements of this elite group is you must be infected with a werewolf virus. They have the responsibility of keeping bad werewolves in check...aka...eliminate them. Since there are plenty of werewolves around and different kinds at that, this group is busy. They fight shadow wolves, demon wolves and werewolves. To add to the tension, there are vampires thrown in making things difficult.

Sasha is sent on a mission. When she returns she learns her team has mysteriously gone missing. Was it a 'were' attack? Vampires? Or something far more sinister? Sasha sets out to find her team and along the way finds government conspiracies, double-dealing vampires and fun in a Walmart parking lot.

Banks takes the werewolf lore and makes it her own with some fresh spins for a fun read. Aurelia led a lively discussion with input from attendees. Aurelia, Kathleen, Liz and Chris had read and enjoyed the book. All would like to continue the series. We had a good time huddled together discussing things that go bump in the night with the weather outside adding to the atmosphere (except for Barry who was unaware it was raining....). Jo hadn't read the book but enjoys Bank's writing. I tried to avoid answering whether or not I'd read the book...Aurelia was clearly on to me. We also had some fun with a handout Chris provided. The handout had so many errors we wondered what book the reviewer was talking about. Characters were given new names; i.e. Shogun became Shotgun, misspellings, you name it. The reviewer was "exacted"

rather 'excited' to get to the next book. Chris kept defending his illiterate handout with the phrase, "but it had 5 stars." Of course, we laughed at him...a lot.

We had a great time and agreed that Walmart parking lot was the place to be (you had to be there). Beware of shadows. And join us next month for *Dead Witch Walking* by Kim Harrison. **(AM)**

### **Drawing A Crowd – Wednesday, October 13, 2010**

This month brought a fresh new beginning at Fantasy Games and Hobbies in Mahwah, NJ as Drawing A Crowd moved from to its new location. The evening itself started off with a great chat with Manny about the forthcoming Games Workshop *Dark Eldar* Codex (yes, I'm still on about that), and the prospective rules there in. When several of us had gathered, we went down to the gaming area and began our discussion (after I had sneaked over to spy on the Chaos vs. Tau battle being waged in the corner). When I brought up the forthcoming *Dark Eldar* (which people can continue to buy me for *Christmas* on advance order through Fantasy Games and Hobbies), I asked folks who would not want a Reaver Jet Bike?! Seriously? Apparently Barry would not want one. Anyhow, on to the Comics!

We started out by discussing the *Justice League*... wait, what has that to do with werewolves? Um, nothing, we decided to start with some warm-ups and mental exercise before going to the mat with the wolf-folk. As such, we chatted on the *Justice League*, the inherent licensing and rights issues, and the problems with making a JL movie. Apparently there was a live action show many years ago, which was cheesy and silly, but Haywood liked it in spite of Doctor Sivana's being poorly portrayed (as many will recall, Dr. Sivana is a perennial favorite villain of Haywood's).

This, of course, led to warming up with *Captain Marvel* and the comic Shazam! Seriously, Captain Marvel is a shape-shifter! I swear! There is a kid and he claps his hands and turns into Captain Marvel. That makes him a shape-shifter and thus on-topic! Don't argue, just go with it. Anyway, Captain Marvel absorbed a good bit of discussion as we talked about DC's acquisition of the character and the lawsuits involved and how the comic came to be named Shazam! Also Nega-bands and the *Negative Zone* were discussed in pretty good depth.

Next up on the list was the recommended feature for the month *Bad Dog*. Lou the *Werewolf* and Wendel the... Loser? are a pair of bounty hunters with little in the way of morality between them. In point of fact they are only slightly less scummy than the scum that they are chasing. Anyway, Lou and Wendel are a fun pair, and Lou is really less werewolf than wolfman (he spends most of the comics in wolfman form), but still it is a good read from the mind that wrote a lot of *Deadpool*'s best comics.

After *Bad Dog* we turned our attention to the *Creature Commandos*, a *WWII Monster Squad* created in 1980 and then advanced into the modern day. One of the squad is a werewolf named Warren Griffith, an obvious nod to WWII thriller writer *W.E.B. Griffin* who was renown as the co-author of several popular *MASH* books. The squad mixed classical horror and SF tropes being a group of scientifically created monsters based on *Universal monsters*. How nobody got sued over this remains a mystery.

Next we turned to *The Age of Ragnarok*, a French *Graphic Novel* based on the Rackham Games *Confrontation* universe, which features *Wolfen*. The *Wolfen* were a race of forest dwelling humans who became cursed and changed into wolfmen by the Scorpion faction. There are Pureblood women who are more human than wolf, but for the most part these baddies are all Wolf all the time. The art is pretty awesome, the story is pretty silly.

*Swamp Thing* came up next, though I am at a loss to recall the circumstances. This led to a diversion into film and the mentioning of *Vincent Price* in the particularly silly *Abominable* *Doctor Phibes and Ann-Marie* and I doing our best Phibes impersonations and intoning 'Vulnavia' over and over. While not the worst film ever made (that would be *Troll 2*), Phibes ranks pretty high on the schlock-meter (Maltin likes it, probably because Price is excellent in spite of the bad direction and awful script).

I think that we briefly touched upon the *Astounding Wolf-Man* at this point, which just recently ended its run. I have heard some good things about this series, but have not read it, and I really am having a hard time remembering what was said due to the medication I am taking... for my cold! I swear it is cold medicine! I stopped taking the anti-psychotics ages ago; just ask the talking marmoset in the corner...

Thanks goodness I did not say that out loud...

High Moon! Yes, High Moon, a western horror which takes all the fun of [Jonah Hex](#) and makes it a lot more ambiguously amoral and vicious. If you liked [Unforgiven](#), then you will like [The Outlaw Josey Wales...](#) and likely also High Moon. [Clint Eastwood](#) agrees: High Moon is a comic book!

Anyway, enough of that silliness. The evening ended when Deena kidnapped Aurelia and Haywood, and I swear I'll get her for that. Next time Gadget... NEXT TIIIIIME!

Oh, yeah, Next time we will be discussing Magic in Comics. Read a [Doctor Strange](#) comic in preparation!

### **Films to Come – Wednesday, October 20, 2010**

Things were changed up a bit this month. The meeting opened with Barry giving the floor to Bill Wagner who had brought a portfolio of movie memorabilia. It was a nice collection of various Tarzan movie posters, Trader Tom and the China Seas (the Boris Karloff-looking guy in the picture confused me and Bill in a complete lack of authenticity), and a few others.

In a bold move to beat us into submission, Barry then moved right into the infamous movie list that usually wraps up the meeting. This time we covered September, October and November - all in their entirety. Barry told us we would have an emphasis on horror films this month with it being October (Halloween, Samhain, and all that good spooky stuff).

September: A recap of films attendees had seen, or in Todd's case movies he wanted to see but didn't. First up was *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*.

*The Town* garnered some discussion - OK, it was more about the talented VS. the non-talented Affleck brother, but still.

*Never Let Me Go* - Barry read the description of the film and commented that he had looked forward to the movie as he had enjoyed director Mark Romanek's *One Hour Photo* - he was disappointed.

Both Bill and Barry had seen *The American*. Bill was mixed in his recommendation of the film while Barry gave it a definitive recommend. Barry went so far as to consider it one of the Top 10 Films of the Year.

*Catfish* had some buzz particularly after we had read Aubrey's review of the film.

*Resident Evil: Afterlife*.... I liked it.

Barry then had a list of the genre/horror films from September's directors separated out for our convenience at the end of the month's list of films. Nice touch.

October was a combination of seen and not out yet, but was fodder for some truly funny moments.

Much discussion about *The Social Network*. Chris and Barry both enjoyed this one.

*Red*, *Secretariat* (recommend from Barry), *Jackass 3-D*, *Nowhere Boy*, *I Spit On Your Grave* (Todd labels this one torture porn), *Carlos* (which resulted in a hilarious debate over how can they make a 5 hour movie about someone no one knows anything about. Todd queried, "Is his name even Carlos?", and Mike Piazza gave us a history lesson on David Niven and Peter Sellers), *Monsters*, and *My Soul To Take*. Once again Barry gave a comprehensive listing of the director's of October's movies that would be considered genre/horror, and had them all compiled at the end of October's movies. Wes Craven dominated the list with 16!

November: What are we anticipating? Dreading? Chris is looking forward to *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hollows*. *Megamind* has Todd confused. *127 Hours*...possibly gross. *Skyline* maybe decent.

Having behaved ourselves to his majes...ummm, our moderator's expectations, we were rewarded with what Barry referred to as Extra Goodies. Yay, reward system! First reward was the always fun All-Time USA Box Office. The movies ranged from *The Expendables* at #18 at \$102,981,571 to #1 *Toy Story 3* coming in at \$412,844,168. Todd was speechless (for about two seconds) that *The Expendables* even made the list! Next was a look at All-Time Non-USA Box Office that ranged from #26 *The Girl with The Dragon Tattoo* @ \$100,000,000 to #1 *Alice in Wonderland* @ \$689,100,000!! It was interesting to see that *Resident Evil: Afterlife* (10), *Prince of Persia* (9), *Salt* (18), *Sex and the City 2* (12), *Knight and Day* (14) all made the Non-USA list in the top 20 but not the USA list at all.

This time we wrapped up the meeting with Guess The Name of the Top Grossing Horror Film USA Box Office in honor of October. We even got good clues this time!! We must be showing progress or Barry was in a sadistic mood. Take your pick. We surprised him by naming those movies in one note - lol. We were given clues for the top 50 movies and had much fun guessing. Bill took sort of a 'keep tossing out numbers and I'll eventually hit the right sequel' approach. We were not sure how the top movies were picked and are disgruntled. The top five movies were:

5. The Ring (OK, we can see it)
4. Godzilla (getting a little unsure about now)
3. Blair Witch Project
2. Gremlins (horror? really?)
1. What Lies Beneath (huh?)

The announcement was made that the store would be closing soon so Barry told the group about some upcoming movies (Big Screen, Horror-thon, etc.). Bill mentioned that Big Screen Classics opens with *The Bridge Over the River Kwai*. Somehow *The Bridge Over the River Kwai* inspired Barry's rousing rendition of 'like a bridge over river kwai, I will blow you up' - Simon and Garfunkel are soooo mad right about now.

Even after that, we continued the evening with more deranged conversation over food. Great time. Excellent job by our moderator. Kudos.

### **Modern Masters – Friday October 22, 2010**

There is certainly something to be said for a vicious protagonist. I know what you are thinking: what is he on about? Well, this month we decided to explore Werewolves, Shape-Shifters, Lycanthropes, and other creatures of mutable physical nature, and with such creatures comes a somewhat natural propensity for violence. While most authors make the dichotomy between the more gentle human form and the violent and angry beast-form very plain, sometimes an author just decides to make their own way. Nicholas Pekearo was one of the latter.

Flashing back, though, to the excitement of the pre-meeting dinner, I have to say that I have never seen Moe's Hand Rolled Burritos quite so busy. Whether it is just that folks have finally figured out how good the food here is, or the fact that the entire world knew I was going to be there and were just interested in being in the same room as my awesomeness (OK, this is hardly very likely, but it is possible), the joint sure was jumping. Barry, Ann-Marie, Liz, Aurelia, Ardeena, and I enjoyed our meals, our conversation, and finding out about our TV preferences. Topics included a discussion of A&E's *The Glades*, which both Aurelia and I enjoy, *Mantracker*, which Aurelia loves and I watch from time to time, and *The Good Guys*, which I was busy cajoling everyone to start watching.

After munching down on chips and burritos, we ran for the Borders to discuss the book. Joined by David and Kathleen, we immediately launched into a discussion of the book. In order to understand the discussion, we have to start at the beginning. *The Wolfman* is a story about a Vietnam veteran who has been afflicted by the curse of lycanthropy. Unlike traditional werewolves, Marlowe Higgins has inherited his curse from his father, who inherited it from his father, who inherited it from an Indian (not sure how). Unlike other inherited traits, like an aquiline nose or receding hairline, Marlowe did not know that his family gene pool included the traits of extremely aggressive back-hair and turning into a nigh-indestructible, remorseless killing machine. Marlowe goes on the grand USA monthly murder tour until he figures out a way to send the beast after people who really do need killing (by which I mean child molesters, serial killers, and just plain awful folks), and then settles down in the town of Evelyn. Of course, we learn all of this through flashbacks throughout the book, so there is no danger of a giant infodump.

Well, that sounds interesting, right? Well, it is an interesting and compelling story, but the problem is that Nicholas, who was in the midst of revising this as a second draft, was killed in the line of duty. My personal feeling is that this would have been one of the best horror novels of the decade had Nicholas survived long enough to be able to work with an editor on polishing this story to the best he could. That is not to say that the book is poorly written, if anything it is a testament to Pekearo how good this draft was. The book itself was remarkably well written and structured, but there were a number of problems that would likely have been fixed with judicious editing. We spent a lot of time discussing those issues, so here they are:

- 1) Small Town of Evelyn: The "Small Town" of Evelyn did not feel, at all, like a tiny little outpost of humanity in the middle of nowhere. This is likely an issue with Nicholas not really being from a small town himself, and assuming that everyplace is like [New York City](#). There is a saying about "writing what you know", and it is a truism for a reason. Towns with populations as small as Evelyn's was purported to be (slightly over 1000), generally do not have two or more cathouses, nor do they have a row of hotels unless they are a huge vacation/tourism hub.
- 2) Procedural: When one writes a procedural story, whether it be legal or otherwise, one should know and understand not just the procedures themselves, but the reasoning behind those procedures. It became very clear that Nicholas was basing his knowledge of procedure on what the story needed to happen as opposed to what procedure would dictate. There is a lot of very sloppy police and detective work here, and it is mostly attributable to a lack of research into the reasons why certain things are procedure.
- 3) Bad Cops: While I am sure that we will all agree that there are some bad policepersons out there, Nicholas seems to have taken pains to paint the cops as either benignly laissez-faire, marginally incompetent, or completely psychopathic. This is unrealistic, and difficult to believe, and also ties into the procedural gaffes.
- 4) Telegraphing the Reveals: Many times Nicholas telegraphed the reveals, showing us way too many points about the characters that would lead us to sigh resignedly when he pulls the curtain and says "Ta-da" during his reveals. Realistically, if you have not figured out the killer by page 80, you just are not trying.

Now, with all these criticisms, you would think that we did not like the book at all. This is simply not the case. The novel was a great examination of Marlowe Higgins, and his development as a character was great. I enjoyed every aspect of the character and his interactions. Frankly, if Nicholas Pekearo had not been killed in the line of duty, I can guarantee that he would be high on my reading list. Knowing, as we do, that Pekearo had a number of other manuscripts in various stages of completion, I will not be surprised when other books of his are posthumously published. Truly it is sad that such a brilliant talent was taken from us before he could develop into the kind of writer that would make [Stephen King](#) sit up and take notice.

### **Heroes & Rogues - Rogue Traders: Wolves in the Fold, Saturday, October 23, 2010**

#### **Chapter 7: Negotiations, Bargains, and Deals (468,127.M38)**

From the personal journals of Wencesia Tremnar...

The past few months have been amazingly productive, and I suspect that the fortunes of our House may finally be assured in this benighted warzone.

After freeing the Aeduii from the depredations of the Halvartii and their allies in House Wolf, we met with representatives of House Singh. Captain Hadarak Singh of the *Hapsushant*, a massive Autocrat-class Cruiser based on the venerable Dictator-class through-deck cruiser, and his retinue boarded our ship on our invitation, and worked closely with myself and cousin Sarvus. For once, Sarvus' dogged adherence to the Imperial Creed seems to be working in my favor, as it appears that he has made an ally in Baroness Lacunae Singh. Sebek the Purser, though, was a pretty shrewd negotiator, and even though we may have convinced him not to use House Shrek's hulls for transport, I suspect that if it were commercially more viable he would cut our throats in a moment. For now though, the Singhs need open markets and allies more than anything. Hopefully their exploitations of Henders and Wuj will go without incident. Given the news out of Wuj, though, it seems like the Singhs may have a rough road ahead.

During our discussions with the Purser and the Baroness, she indicated some interest in information on the Henders and Wuj systems. Sarvus provided a great deal of information, and in exchange, the Baroness sent over a eunuch with a holy Relic from the battle between the Primarchs of the Ultramarines and the Emperor's Children. It now rests under the care of the Eunuch Kilarto in our Shrine aboard the ship. With luck, we can marry Sarvus into the House Singh. I believe that this could be a viable first step on the road towards restoring House Tremnar to its rightful position of supremacy.

While securing our trade lane between lol and Sparta Hill, we were attacked by the renegades of the *Tremnar's Pride*. The *Pride*, was waiting for us at the last leg of our route to lol, and attempted to ambush us. Thank the Emperor that our Helmsman, Alequintus DeMarke, was quick on the maneuvering, and that Lilith Benetek happened to chart an asteroid field nearby during our previous transits through this area of space. Jacob Dreer managed to communicate with the Astropath Drusilla Iorga aboard the *Pride*, and that little witch indicated that we were carrying something that they felt was important enough to risk coming out of hiding and hitting us well behind Imperial lines.

Taking the information learned by Jacob, Lorren went to the Librarium and searched for some hidden clues, however it was not until Micro and Sarvus looked on the ceiling that we discovered the truth. The ceiling was inscribed with a painting of the planetary surface of the Commonwealth world Tontrinas. The painting was put there approximately 50 years ago by the Captain-Missionary Abbot Albrecht Shrek. Given Ambrosius Shrek's predilection for Xenos artifacts, I suspect that this does not bode well. An additional issue is the fact that the world of Tontrinas, which is here in the Lupus Cluster, was cut off from the rest of the Empire 50 years ago.

We discovered a log from one of the founders of House Shrek in the Shrine later on that helps to shed some light on the painting of Tontrinas. The journal of Jeremiah Mordanus-Shrek, Preceptor-General of the colonial effort in the Lupus Sector, describes the Human expansion in this area after the Long Night. During this period, thousands of years before the Emperor emerged victorious on Earth, Jeremiah established dozens of outposts and colonies in the area, but was himself driven out of the Cluster by the Eldar at the Battle of Tontrinas, which saw the destruction of more than 40,000 of his troops using some sort of potent psyker-weapon. The Eldar Farseer advised him never to return to Tontrinas as the Eldar would always be there to guard the first step on the Path.

This information is interesting, though it hardly seems worth the effort that our cousins are going through to obtain it. Likely we would need some vital pieces of data to determine what their interest in the information is. As we cannot be assured of getting onto and off of Tontrinas without incident, we will likely be enjoined from further exploration in this direction for the moment. Should that change, however, we will need to be wary to seize the main chance.

In the mean time, we have accepted an endeavour to attempt to salvage some derelict vessels in the Shotra system. Several months ago there was a massive battle there and a large number of Imperial and Commonwealth vessels were crippled or destroyed. The Navy, in desperate need of war materiel, has provided us a warrant to examine and strip as many of the hulks as possible to obtain parts. While not the most lucrative contract, it will get us closer to the front lines, and possibly allow us an opportunity to get across the lines to Tontrinas so we can determine what the renegades want with Jeremiah's logs and the map.

We were able to salvage a great deal from an Exorcist Grand Cruiser, and we rescued a large number of stranded crewers from a Commonwealth Repulse-class Dreadnought. The Dreadnought, CNS *Ascendancy* was mostly intact, however the Admiral of the Fleet that attack Shontra managed to activate a self-destruct sequence and destroy the hulk before any meaningful salvage operation could be undertaken. This caused a great deal of destruction and resulted in the loss of 81 crew-persons from our salvage team on the Exorcist.

In the end, we managed to speed up our salvage operations with the assistance of Paul Tarvus, the former XO of the Commonwealth dreadnought. He is hoping that his good behavior will ensure that we return him and his crewmates to Commonwealth space, however I am not sure that this would be the best, or most profitable, avenue we could use to ensure our continued successes...

#### **Themes of the Fantastic – Tuesday, October 26, 2010**

Themes of the Fantastic wrapped up our all things werewolf month very nicely. The cloudy, rainy weather added a nice touch. Of course, knowing we're the only ones in the library helps too.

Moderator Bill Wagner opened the meeting by asking (1) what was the origin of the werewolf mythology and (2) providing a comparison/contrast of the vampire vs. werewolf in various medias.

Todd answered the first question with what would become "the" answer of the evening - "it depends on the mythology".... now click your heels together three times and repeat the phrase.

Since we covered so much ground, it would be easier to break the discussion down into the categories:

### **Books**

Ana offered both Charlaine Harris and Jim Butcher. Both authors use werewolves in their work. Charlaine Harris has werewolves in her *True Blood/Southern Vampire* series and Jim Butcher has werewolves in Harry Dresden's world. Both authors tweak the legends a bit and use several different types of werewolves and each type includes different features or weaknesses associated with werewolves in various myths. Werewolves aren't the only 'weres' stalking the night.

I mentioned *Le Livre de Jack* by Denis Pierre Filippi. This is a delightful book about a young boy who is dared to enter a house said to be haunted. Jack enters the house and finds a mysterious book about his life. It scares him and runs out. Soon after he begins to transform into a werewolf. When he goes back to the house to find the book, it has disappeared and he must find a way to break the curse. But how? I also threw in Neil Gaiman's *Only the End of the Word Again* and the werewolves in Laurell K. Hamilton's *Anita Blake* series of books.

Barry provided *Man-Wolf* from Marvel Comics. *Man-Wolf* aka John Jameson is a mindless beast that gives Spiderman some problems. In other realms *Man-Wolf* is known as Stargod. With powers such as super strength, agility, speed and sharp claws, it looks like Spiderman might be busy.

Todd gave us *Wolfsbane & Mistletoe*. This collection of short stories edited by Charlaine Harris puts werewolves in some fun positions. The holidays can bring out the beast in anyone. They are particularly hard for lycanthropes. Todd gave us the delightful Gail Carriger series *Soulless, Changeless and Blameless*. Werewolves are important to the main storyline.

Steve Rubin brought up an Asimov story in which a werewolf approaches a wizard for help with his curse.

Chris reminded us of the recently read Nicholas Pekearo book *The Wolfman*.

### **Movies**

Chuck - *Wolf* with Jack Nicholson, *Cry of the Werewolf*, a low-budget gem, *American Werewolf in London*. Chuck also tossed in the anime *Vampire* that had no vampires but was instead about werewolves.

Steve R - *Stardust* by Neil Gaiman

Todd - *Underworld* franchise, *Wallace & Gromit: Curse of the Wererabbit*, *Teen Wolf*

Both Todd and Ana mentioned *Pan's Labyrinth*

I added *I Was A Teenage Werewolf*, *Monster Squad*, *Mad Monster Party*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks Meet the Wolfman*, and *Brotherhood of the Wolf* and the anime *Wolf's Rain*

Bill chimed in with the *Twilight* series (*New Moon*), and *Dog Soldiers*

### **TV**

Todd - *Wolf Lake*, *She-Wolf of London* (aka *Love and Curses*)

Chuck - *The Gates*

Chris - *Vampire Diaries* currently has a werewolf theme running

### **RPG**

Todd and Ana discussed the role-playing game *World of Darkness: Werewolf the Apocalypse*

### **Songs**

Steve R - *Werewolf of London* by Warren Zevon

I added *Li'l Red Riding Hood*, by Sam the Sham and the Pharoahs. Cool song!

Of course Barry, not to be outdone, added a song as well. The problem was he had poor Ana asking, "what song is that?" when no such song exists...Barry's song? \*To the tune of *We Are the World*\* We are the wolves. We are the children.... of the night. He is certainly...creative.

### **Legends**

*Beast of Bray Road* - Todd brought up this legend in American lore and I very happily reminded everyone that syfy did make a movie about it! I think Todd threw himself off of the chair.

Bill questioned us about various lycan attributes to which the standard answer became "it depends on the mythology" - not a cop out, it really does. Bill also wondered if a werewolf was in the space shuttle would he change every 90 minutes. Bill felt as far as curses go, having to lock yourself up for one day a month isn't such a burden. Ana reminded him it would be more like three days and you'd be locked up that entire time.

Somewhere along the way we discussed trains running on time, despots and RPG benefits. We had fun with this topic and it was a nice fit for October. Good job Bill. Good answers attendees.

### **SFSNNJ Members Review Books, Movies, TV**

#### **Star Wars and the Bhagavad Gita – Steve Spinosa**

Jim and I have been reading the Bhagavad Gita recently for the next discussion of the Great Books group in Mountain Lakes, and we believe that some of the Jedi beliefs espoused by Yoda are very similar to ideas mentioned in The Bhagavad-Gita. For example, in the third prequel *Revenge of The Sith*, Yoda cautions Anakin about attachments to other people saying "The fear of loss is a path to the dark side, young one.... The shadow of greed, attachment is. What you fear to lose, train yourself to lose. Let go of fear, and loss cannot hurt you". In chapter 5 of the Gita, Krishna says, "He who dedicates his actions to the Spirit, without attachment to them, he is no more tainted by sin than the water lily is wetted by water". The characters Qui-gon Jin, Yoda, & Obi-wan tell Anakin and later, Luke that "Luminous beings are we, not this crude matter", while Krishna says that "he whose mind does not wander, and is engaged in constant meditation, attains the Supreme Spirit", after death. So it's possible that George Lucas was influenced by Krishna as well as Joseph Campbell (among other influences, I'm sure)...

#### **Review of Astro Boy(2009) – Steve Spinosa**

Last night the Starz/Encore family of channels ran the 2009 film version of *Astro Boy*. It differs slightly from the old TV series in that Dr. Tenma (Nicholas Cage) creates the boy robot to replace his late son Toby (he even names the boy Toby at first). Then when he realizes that the robot can't make up for his loss, he sends Toby away. President Stone wants Toby captured & turned off in order to use his "blue core" in his new weapon "The Peacekeeper". Toby escapes Stone's forces and ends up in a junkyard where he befriends three robots who call themselves the Robot Revolutionary Front, as well as a group of orphans led by a girl named Cora (who's really a runaway trying to get home) Toby is renamed "Astro" by the robots and the kids who collect parts for a Robot Repairer Mr. Hamegg (who promotes robot fights on the side). Hamegg knocks out Astro electrically and tries to force him to fight in his "Robot Games". Astro refuses at first then whips all the opponents except for Zog the giant robot, who lets Astro live when he has the chance to destroy him. Astro is captured by Stone and Dr. Tenma is forced to remove his blue core, but then puts it back in an act of defiance against President Stone. Stone then puts the highly dangerous "Red core" into the peacekeeper which envelops Stone and becomes a monster. Astro eventually sacrifices himself by merging his robot body with the Peacekeeper destroying it. But Zog recharges Astro's blue core and Astro is restored to life to be a hero for Metro City. Very well done with excellent performances by Nick Cage, Donald Sutherland (as President Stone), and Nathan Lane (as Mr. Hamegg). Grade: A+

#### **The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane – Chris Hasselkus**

Since we are pretty much done with discussing werewolves and the like, let's go on to next month's topic - witches! I just read *The Physick Book of Deliverance Dane* by Katherine Howe. The story deals with a young woman, Connie Goodwin, who is doing research for her doctoral dissertation. Along the way she learns of a physick book and the name Deliverance Dane - thus the title. The present time in the book is 1991, but Connie is haunted by visions of the witch trials of 1692. The book is extremely well written and researched; a real page-turner. Highly recommended.

#### **Letters to Julie DVD – Chris Hasselkus**

Roger Ebert begins his 3-star (\*\*\*) May 12, 2010 review: "I know 'Letters to Juliet' is a sappy melodrama, and I don't mind in the least. I know the ending is preordained from the setup. I know the characters are broad and comforting stereotypes. In this case, I simply don't care. Sometimes we have personal reasons for responding to a film." He goes on to say that years ago he interviewed Vanessa Redgrave (as well as her late sister Lynn). So he had a kind of vested interest. The story concerns Sophie (Amanda Seyfried from "Mamma Mia" fame, who also played a Sophie / Sophia there as well - no relation).

People post letters written to Juliet (as in Romeo &.) asking for advice. Sophie answers the one written by Claire (Vanessa Redgrave) who is seeking a lost love from 50 years ago. The search takes Sophie, Claire and her grandson Charlie (Christopher Egan) all over Italy searching for Lorenzo Bartolini (who is portrayed by Franco Nero, who happens to be married to Vanessa Redgrave in real life). Though predictable, it is a lovely story set in beautiful shots of the Italian countryside. Definitely a worthwhile experience.

### **Upcoming Conventions**

<http://www.scificonventions.com/> - take a look at this site for different conventions

<http://www.scifisource.com/> - great site for all things genre

**Clifton NJ Comic Book Expo:** Clifton Recreation Center, 1232 Main Ave, Clifton, NJ 07011 - 11/14/2010  
<http://www.njcomicbookshows.com>

Show hours are 10-4. Admission is FREE! Free parking! Over 200,000 comic books & comic-related items (action figures, t-shirts & more) for sale!

**Philcon** - Cherry Hill, New Jersey - Nov. 19-21 - <http://2010a.philcon.org/>  
Location: Crowne Plaza Hotel, 2349 West Marlton Pike  
Philcon is one of the oldest General Science Fiction Conventions around.